1 & 2 Why Community Compost?

Welcome to Community Composting

Community Composting is where a community gets together to make compost. It is a very rewarding activity. Community composting make sense of valuable resources that are so often regarded as 'waste' or 'rubbish'.

Community Composting also helps local authorities fulfil their commitments to wiser use of resources under Local Agenda 21.

Local Agenda 21

At the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, the governments of the world committed themselves to caring for and using the earth's limited resources more fairly and wisely. This was called Agenda 21 : from this they realised that, in order for their commitment to become reality, they must work at the local level.

Local Agenda 21(LA21) is all about local people setting their own agenda for action, to help improve their own immediate area. LA21 provides the opportunity for all to make a positive contribution to their environment.

Community composting is a way of putting words into action. People are increasingly beginning to think about how they live their lives and how much waste they produce. Establishing Community Composting schemes will act as a catalyst to provide a global solution to a local problem.

Why make compost?

Twenty million tons of domestic rubbish is produced in the UK each year, and around 25 – 30 per cent of this consists of compostable kitchen scraps and garden clippings. There is a government target to recycle or compost 25 per cent of this valuable resource by the year 2000.

Composting reduces the amount of waste we throw away, using it to make a valuable soil improver for gardeners, growers and landscapers.

The benefits of making compost may be felt by individuals, by the community and in the natural environment. Dustbins smell much sweeter if the compostable waste is removed, and sorting the rest of the rubbish for recycling becomes a much more pleasant task.

Reduction in the amount of waste being sent to landfill has a number of advantages. Pollution from the sites is reduced, a smaller area of land is used up, and liability for landfill tax by waste disposal companies is lessened, lowering the overall cost of dealing with waste.

If compostable material can be put to good use then less will be burnt on garden bonfires and this in turn will help reduce smoke pollution. The likelihood of fly-tipping of garden residue is diminished if it can be made into a useful product instead.

Depending on its properties, the end product can become a soil improver, mulch, or potting mix ingredient. These recycled products can be used instead of peat, which is good news for threatened peatlands and their wildlife,

Where compost heaps are created they encourage a range of wildlife such as grass snakes and hedgehogs. Worms and beneficial creatures that make their home in the heaps can spread out from there into the surrounding soil, enhancing the natural recycling processes.

There are other fringe benefits from composting, such as the production of heat in the breakdown process. This can be used to heat a greenhouse or water piped through the heap.

Compost can be made in the back garden by individuals. Even in a flat or house with no garden, a worm bin can be set up to recycle kitchen scraps. When people get together, however, larger quantities of material can be composted for the benefit of the community as a whole.

Peatland conservation

Peat comes from fragile peatland habitats and to extract it peat bogs are dreained and stripped of vegetation – destroying their wildlife. Peatbogs are vitally important. The rarest type of bog is found in the lowlands. These 'raised' bogs are islands of sphagnum moss, living history books and home to fascination plants and animals such as the sundew and the raft spider. Amazing finds have been made in peat bogs including the mummified bodies of people who died thousands of years ago. Bogs store carbon, stopping it from escaping into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide – a 'greenhouse gas'. Lowland raised bog is one of Europe's rarest, most threatened habitats.

Only 6,000 ha of lowland bog remains in a near natural state in the UK (in 1997): 94 percent has been destroyed or damaged. People who would never dream of using products made of tigers and rhinos are causing the destruction of our own rare species by using peat in their gardens.

Composts and leafmould can replace peat in the garden, giving peatland wildlife a better chance of survival.

What is Community Composting?

Community Composting is where a group of people, a village, or couple of streets share a composting system. The community provides the raw materials and benefits from the end product. A portion of the material currently being disposed of in landfill sites is turned into a valuable product for use in the community, either by individuals in their own gardens or for larger projects within the local environment. It also helps local authorities meet government recycling targets.

What are the advantages?

There may be times when making compost alone is either impractical or undesirable. For example, a small back garden may not produce enough matter or the right balance of soft and woody material to build a successful compost heap. Working together for the benefit of the community pools resources and can make the venture more viable as well as more enjoyable.

Advantages of Community Composting

- Recycles one person's waste into another's resource
- Pools raw materials, enhancing the chances of creating a good end product
- Means fewer car trips to the tip
- Shares labour and enthusiasm
- Shares expense, materials, tools etc
- Groups can attract funds more easily than individuals
- Builds community spirit
- Provides education about recycling, composting and soil care
- Encourages an exchange of knowledge and experience between sectors of the community such as young and old, beginner and expert
- Raises awareness of environmental issues and problems
- Helps local authorities fulfil their commitment to Local Agenda 21 issues
- Makes it easier to take advantage of local marketing opportunities

The concept is a relatively new one, and projects are springing up all over the country. The Community Composting Network (see below) has a membership of more than 60. all the signs point to a substantial increase in Community Composting throughout the UK, and beyond.

Much of the legislation relating to Community Composting is untried and is developing as time goes on. Changes will occur in the laws and in their interpretation. Local authorities have different approaches to Community Composting. It is important to check with the relevant officials at each stage. What is permissible in one area may well not be in another.

Community Composting Network (CCN)

The Department of the Environment supported the establishment of CCN through the Environmental Action Fund in 1996.

Aims of the CCN

- To provide accessible, practical information about composting, including the social, legal, and financial aspects
- To identify all Community Composting projects throughout the country and catalogue the extent and nature of their work

- To promote information sharing, problem solving and buddy systems between projects

When considering starting a project, the CCN should be your first port of call. The Network is staffed part-time and produces a quarterly newsletter. Its steering group is made up of people who are closely involved in Community Composting and other recycling activities. They should be able to advise on all aspects of your operation and on any changes in legislation. The Network can supply a list of current projects – so you can get in touch with any other groups in your locality.

3 Planning the Enterprise

The aims of this pack

This action pack is designed to provide the information you need on all aspects of a Community Composting operation. Help and advice is offered for all stages, from the initial planning to the distribution of your valuable compost. This card will serve as a check list to help steer you through the operation, from the initial idea to finding uses for your end product. Community Composting projects sometimes fail due to some breakdown in the flow of operations. Careful planning from the beginning will minimise problems.

Aims of the enterprise

The aims of a Community Composting venture are to recycle valuable materials, removing them from the waste stream and producing a good quality compost and other products, which can be used in the garden and landscaping. This will reduce the amount of material being disposed of in landfill sites, and provide a range of products that can be used as a soil improver or growing medium ingredient.

Forming a group

For legal and financial reasons as well as for pooling labour resources, it is necessary to form a recognised group. Legally this has to be a minimum of two persons; in fact this is likely to be a small group of like-minded individuals who want to start making compost or who are already involved in some related activity, such as another form of recycling or allotment gardening. This group of individuals can then form a Composting Club
(see *Legal Aspects*).

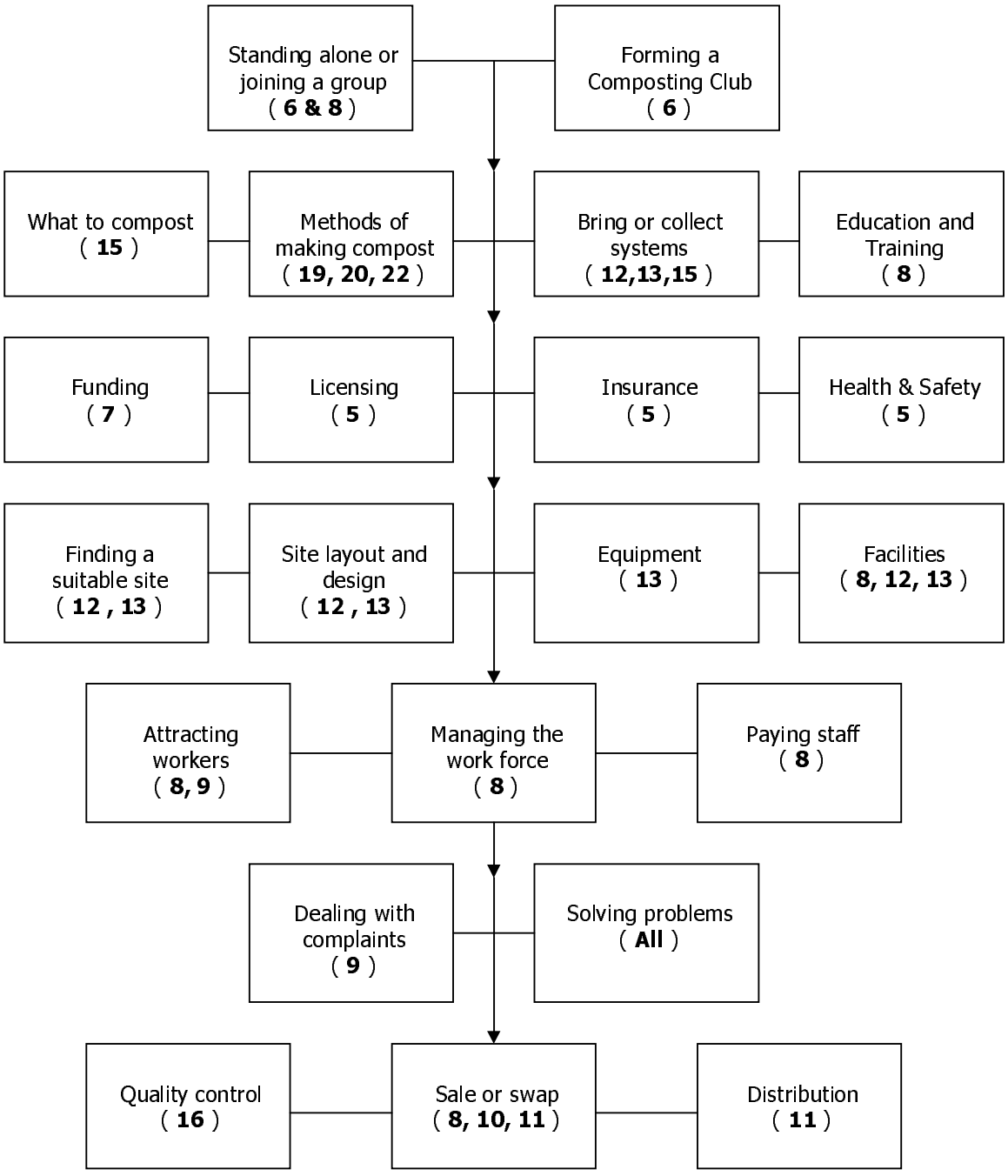
The number of people necessary to operate the enterprise will depend on the scale and methods adopted. To a certain extent this will also depend on the size of community which will serve and be served by it. On the other hand it may be necessary to limit the size of operations to the capabilities of the work force on hand. Start small but with room to expand. That way you will not feel swamped and give up before the scheme has had a real chance.

Aspects to consider

Although fine detail can be filled in as you go along it is as well to be aware of the various legal and practical implications of such a venture before you start. Being aware of possible requirements means you can be prepared for them.

Overleaf is a chart indicating points to cover when planning your enterprise. It refers to the cards in this pack which deal in some depth with each aspect. Once you have decided on the best approach for each subject area you will be ready to start your own Community Composting project.

Points to Consider when Planning a Community Composting Project



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		Making Compost 2			

Once you have considered all aspects, decided how to run the enterprise and allocated jobs, all you have to do is decide on the date to start and off you go!

Other relevant sections

- All

4 Getting Started

Initial contacts

When considering starting a Community Composting project there are places you can go for help and guidance before you start. Talk to others who have already made their way through the necessary maze of decisions. This can help to make sense of it all and answer immediate questions. Read case studies to see how others have coped. This pack includes several which give ideas of what can be done in various situations. Visit existing projects to see how operations can be set up, and gather ideas of layout, managing the site and possibly even situations to avoid. Operations vary a great deal according to the different aims and existing conditions of each project. Make personal contact with as many different groups as is reasonable to give you an idea of the range of possibilities.

The first port of call should be to the Community Composting Network (CCN). They can tell you who you need to speak to and what you need to find out in order to set up a successful venture in your situation. They may be able to tell you who is operating a scheme close to you and who to contact.

Local Agenda 21 (LA21)

LA21 is the means by which the local authority (county council or district council) carries out their commitment to producing plans for sustainable development for the local area arising from the Earth Summit in 1992 (see *Using This Pack*). A Community Composting scheme could meet a number of the criteria for an LA21 project.

- Taps grassroots enthusiasm from within the community
- Addresses a pressing environmental problem (waste disposal)
- Offers a low-tech, environmentally friendly solution (recycling organic waste)
- Provides employment and training
- Helps communicate the message of sustainability in a meaningful way to ordinary people

Approach the local LA21 officer to find out if anyone else has expressed an interest in setting up a composting project in your area. If so then you can contact that person to discuss a strategy. If no one else has contacted the LA21 officer, register your own interest and ask about the likelihood of financial assistance and help with finding a suitable site.

Recycling officer

The local recycling officer may also be able to offer advice and guidance. Details can be found in the telephone book, listed under your local authority.

Setting up the project

To maximise the chance of official recognition and in the hope of avoiding expensive licences it is advisable to form a Composting Club (se *Legal aspects 2*). It is also possible to set up a composting scheme within an existing group such as an allotment association, gardening club, school, scout group or city farm. Once a core of interested persons have got together and decided on a plan of action, the next step is to arrange an inaugural meeting to get the community involved.

The inaugural meeting

The inaugural meeting is a public meeting to inform all interested parties in the local community that you plan to set up a Community Composting scheme and to discuss how this should happen. Notice of the scheme can be given through newsletters, by letter to parents or members as appropriate, or through leaflets distributed in the district and posters in local shops and libraries. Try to reach as many local people as possible to recruit potential volunteers, contact donors of raw materials and inform possible objectors so that all worries can be addressed. It may be advisable to have an expert on hand to help with the presentation of your plans. The CCN may be able to help here. Plan the meeting well in advance. Display material will help to put the point across and may be obtained from other schemes.

Suggested agenda

- Welcome and introduction
- Introduction to Community Composting
- Possible sites
- Possible funding
- Name of composting group; should it be a "Composting Club"?
- Election of officers and other members
- Who should be contacted: planning officer, recycling officer, waste licensing officer
- Date, time and place of first working group meeting

You should come away from this meeting with support for the venture from the community and a core of people ready to organise it. To prevent interest waning the first meeting of the new working group should take place as soon as possible after the inaugural meeting.

First working group meeting

The purpose of the first meeting of the new working group is to sort out thee organisation of the enterprise. All those interested in taking part in the work should attend. Planning is essential to make the meeting go smoothly and address the essential points. A considerable amount of background work has to be done in order to present the intended organisation of the group. A working party will need

to do a lot of homework ahead of time. Again it would be helpful to have an experienced Community Composter at this meeting for guidance.

The topics which need to be addressed

- Preferred site location
- Size of facility
- Number of members
- Composting method
- Material to be composted
- Collection / delivery details
- Tools, machinery and equipment required
- Outline working plan
- Discussion of constitution
- Publicity
- Start date

Subsequent meetings

Further meetings of the working group will be required to cover administrative and development details including costing, funding, publicity, and legal considerations. An annual general meeting open to all interested parties may be necessary to allow the election of new officers and to report back on progress to the local community.

Other relevant cards

- Using This Pack
- Planning the Enterprise
- Site Issues
- Legal Issues 1 & 2
- Case Studies

Useful contacts

- Community Composting Network

5 Legal Aspects 1

The legal side of setting up a Community Composting operation need not be as daunting as it first appears. Advice and guidance is available at all points along the way. However, it may be helpful to have some insight into the various aspects early in the planning stage as some decisions will have a bearing on the legal steps to be taken. You may need a licence if you wish to sell the end product, for example.

Planning permission

This should be considered when planning where to site your operation. If setting up your project constitutes a change in the use of the land, planning permission may be required. The local planning officer at your local authority will be able to advise you if this is needed in your case.

Licensing

Community Composting schemes must either hold a waste management licence or an exemption certificate from the Environment Agency. Most schemes apply for an exemption. Exemptions may be granted where less than 1,000 cubic metres are being composted (this does not include any material being stored on site) in the following circumstances:

1. The waste is composted on the site where it is produced
2. The waste is composted on the site where the end product is to be used
3. The waste is composted on a site occupied by the producer of the waste, or
4. The waste is composted on a site occupied by the user of the compost.

So allotment sites could qualify for exemption if composting takes place on the site where the end product is to be used or where the composting material is produced. Where all users are registered as occupiers of the composting site an exemption may also be granted under item 4 above (see *Legal Aspects 2*). The licensing authority is likely to interpret the regulations favourably for small-scale Community Composting schemes.

The Environment Agency is responsible for administering waste disposal regulations which cover composting operations. Licences and advice may be obtained from them. The details of your area office may be found in the telephone directory. Your local authority may also be able to advise you.

Waste disposal licences cost approximately £600 per year. Conditions of the licence must then be adhered to; these may include testing of the material and the construction of concrete bases and a system catch any effluent, all of which cost money. Detailed record keeping is required. Once licensed, becoming exempt again at a later date also costs (£800 in the case of Dean Community Compost; see *Case Studies 3*). This must be carefully considered.

Legally, unless the venture is run on a non-profit-making basis, a licence is required to permit you to transport waste. This is necessary if your scheme plans to collect the raw materials. Additional licence fees are in the region of £70 for three years at present.

Forming a Composting Club will mean that you can avoid licensing (see *Legal Aspects 2*)

Registration

All schemes must be registered with their local Waste Regulation Authority at the County Council either as a Licensee or exempt. You must register for waste disposal and, if relevant, for carriage of waste even if your project qualifies for exemption.

Insurance

All projects need insurance.

Necessary cover

- Public liability (at least £2,000,000)
- Accidents, theft, fire and vandalism
- Personal accident if power-driven machinery is used

Where the project is part of an existing scheme, for example for recycling or in a school, it may be possible to add cover to an existing policy. Insurance packages are available for affiliated members from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) at a cost of around £100 per year.

Health and Safety

The welfare of workers on the site is of paramount importance.

Reasons for safety measures

- Risk of injury or damage to personal property must be minimised
- Providing a safe work place will help to encourage volunteers
- In case of accident, insurers will require evidence that all precautions were taken
- A comprehensive Health and Safety policy may be required for grant funding

Areas to be addressed

- Use of hand tools such as spades, forks, shovels, bill hooks, rakes and loppers
- Use of machinery such as shredders, chippers, tractors and trailers
- Health and hygiene such as protection against tetanus, leptospirosis, bioaerosols, noise, lifting strain and damage to eyes
- Child health and welfare, if appropriate

Safety equipment and protective clothing must be supplied as appropriate and training provided if necessary, for example in the case of the operation of shredders. Individuals operating machinery must be fully trained and familiar with the equipment. Those involved are responsible for safe operation of equipment and safety of themselves and others. Machinery can only be operated by the named operators who are fully trained and insured. If children or people with disabilities are involved, remember that thought must be given to extra supervision and safety provisions.

According to the activity undertaken on site a range of protective equipment may be required.

Protective equipment

- Gloves / gauntlets
- Goggles
- Ear defenders
- First aid kit
- Guards where appropriate on machinery

Protective clothes and footwear should be worn at all times. Any fuel stored on site must be kept in a secure area and no smoking allowed nearby.

The Composting Association is aiming to produce guidance notes for composting site managers on occupational health issues. These are principally aimed at larger operations but may have relevance for projects of this scale.

Other relevant sections

- Planning the Enterprise
- Getting Started
- Legal Aspects2
- Labour Needs and Issues
- Site Issues 1 & 2
- Composting in Schools
- Shredding and Shredders
- Case Studies

Useful contacts

- BTCV
- The Composting Association

6 Legal Aspects 2

Composting Clubs

Forming a Composting Club is one way of fulfilling the criteria for exemption from licensing.

All members of the club – who may be suppliers of *compostable* material and/or users of the compost – are registered as 'occupiers of the composting site'. In this way the project may gain exemption from the requirement to have a waste disposal licence (see *Legal Aspects 1*)

Although local authorities differ in their interpretation of the legislation, many waste regulation authorities look favourably on any enterprise which removes material from the waste stream. However, a Composting Club's status may not be recognised, and it is advisable to check with your local authority before proceeding.

The legislation regarding Composting Clubs is in its infancy. Interpretation of the law varies from area to area and is likely to change with time. Check the current situation with the CCN.

If you decide to form a composting Club you will need to write a constitution for it. This provides a legal framework for your enterprise as well as a basis for running your group.

The Club constitution

In order to satisfy two of the criteria for licence exemptions (see *Legal Aspects 1)*, a constitution has to be written for the Club which lists all its members as occupiers of the site. The Seagull enterprise in Skegness (see *Case Studies*) has a system for automatically making any buyer of its compost a member of their Club thus satisfying the occupancy section. Discuss this with the local waste disposal authority in order to gain an exemption certificate.

The constitution is a formal document which should have a definite structure and cover the following points:

1. **Name**
   A name should be chosen which is not misleading, preferably short and memorable such as "Rotters" or "Run A Muck"

2. **Objects**
   An outline of all that the Club will do. All of its proposed activities must be written down within this section. Any activity not included will be unauthorised. An example of this might be "recycling of garden waste and education and awareness of recycling issues".

3. **Powers**
   The means by which the Club will achieve its objects. A general clause like "The Club shall have the power to do all things necessary for the fulfilment of its objects" will cover all eventualities.

4. **Membership**
   Mention of occupancy of the site by all members should be made here. The Club must not leave itself liable to abuse of the occupancy clause by the members, however. The advice of a solicitor is strongly recommended.

5. **Subscriptions**
   Describes who should pay how much for membership, for example £1 membership or free to anyone delivering raw material or buying compost.

6. **Indemnity**
   Ensure that members are not liable for any loss suffered by the Club, unless wilfully caused by the member, and are entitled to reimbursement of any expenses incurred while working for the Club.

7. **Meetings**
   Details types of meetings to be held (such as committee meetings, annual general meetings, extraordinary general meetings), who may convene a meeting, who may attend and vote, the quorum (minimum attendance) required for proceedings to be valid and the notice required to be given to members beforehand.

8. **Club Committee**
   Covers the officers to be appointed (for example Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and so on), methods of appointing and removing committee members, powers of the committee, meeting procedures and quorum required for committee meeting proceedings to be valid.

9. **Finance**
   Details the period of the financial year (for example April – March or January – December), the responsibilities of the Treasurer (such as the annual accounts, book keeping) and how finances will be audited if necessary.

10. **Alterations to the constitution**
    States the notice required to hold a meeting to make alterations and the majority required for alterations to be carried out. This usually takes place at the annual general meeting or an extraordinary general meeting.

11. **Dissolution**
    Outlines the procedure to be followed if a Club decides to fold. This decision usually requires a majority at a Club committee meeting followed by a majority at an extraordinary general meeting.

Help with your constitution

The preparation of legal documents may be a little intimidating at first. However, help in the construction of your Club constitution may be sought from C CN or BTCV. Alternatively, any successful venture operating as a Composting Club may be willing to talk to you.

Other relevant cards

- Getting Started
- Planning the Enterprise
- Legal Aspects 1
- Case Studies

Useful contacts

- BTCV
- Community Composting Network

7 Grants and Other Funding

Expenditure

Community Composting schemes can be run on varying scales from totally non-profit making self serving ventures to large businesses. They bridge the gap between composting your own clippings in the back yard to large municipal operations. Both expenditure and revenue reflect the scale of the project.

Possible costs

- Site rental
- Licence fees
- Transport
- Labour
- Administration
- Marketing
- Publicity
- Information i.e. leaflets, posters etc
- Hire or purchase of tools and equipment
- Analysis of compost
- Insurance

Income

Income can be generated by obtaining grants in the form of money or kind, by claiming recycling credits, by the sale of finished compost or some combination of these. The Community Composting Network and Waste Watch can provide advice and information.
If the venture is set up as a business the Government's Enterprise Allowance and the Prince's Youth Businesses Trust can be tapped.

Possible sources of funding
(please note many of these are out of date including Enterprise Allowance)

- Local Agenda 21 (LA21) Officer (local authority)
- Waste Disposal Department (local authority)
- Recycling Officer (local authority)
- Civic Trust
- Rural Action Fund
- European Rural Development Commission
- Shell Better Britain
- Rural Community Council (RCC)
- BTCV

See *Useful Contacts*

Attracting sponsorship and grant aid

Local businesses wishing to 'green up' their image may well be persuaded to support a viable and popular scheme. The same applies to local authorities and other funding sources. Although a direct approach can be made to such places, your cause may be helped, and indeed may attract interest from unthought-of sources, by positive publicity in the local press, or on the radio or television. The aim here is to raise the profile of the scheme.

Recycling credits

One way in which you can gain financial reward for recycling is by claiming recycling credits. Credit payments are made based on the amount of material that you keep out of the waste disposal system. Accurate records have to be kept of how much compost you distribute, as this is the only practical way of measuring, albeit indirectly, what the project has actually achieved.
Contact the Waste Officer at your local authority for details, The value of recycling credits varies from region to region but may be worth up to £40/tonne.
Unfortunately not all local authorities are keen to pay recycling credits – so you may have to fight for them.

Landfill tax

All material sent to landfill is now taxed and monies collected are available for distribution under certain circumstances. The scheme is still in its infancy and details are likely to change, but at present a Community Composting enterprise would appear to fit the criteria for a project eligible to apply for funds from this source. Details of the scheme are available from ENTRUST, tel: 0171 823 4574. (*please note: landfill tax is now channelled via local authorities, rather than through ENTRUST when this was written*)

Supplementary credit approval

This is in effect a loan from the Department of the Environment to the local authority for capital expenditure which would not otherwise be available due to budget restraints. Your venture would need to join with other organisations and your local authority in order to bid for it. The project at Heeley City Farm in Sheffield was able to raise a substantial amount of funding in this way.

Sale of compost

It is highly unlikely that you will be able to fund your scheme from the sale of compost so do not rely on it. Even Seagull in Skegness, which is a fairly large operation, would not be able to fund themselves from their sales. However, if it is decided to sell the product, attention must be given to packaging, marketing and distribution. A small amount may be sold from the site or larger quantities through garden centres, depending on the scale of operation.

Remember not to undervalue the product but to charge according to its quality. Compost may be sold in bulk, if large enough quantities are produced, or in bags. As a guide, if £3 is charged for a 40L (25kg) bag this is equivalent to £120 per tonne.

Example of funding

The Seagull group in Skegness has obtained the following funding:

£800 from Civic Trust to buy an 8 hp shredder
£4,000 from local authority to buy wood chipper
£15,000 per year from local authority for running costs
£625 grant from Rural Action Fund for analysis of compost
£10,000 per year sale of compost and other recyclables
£11.70 per tonne recycling credits
See *Case Studies 1*

Other relevant sections

- PR & Marketing
- Getting Started
- Case Studies
- Useful Contacts

Useful contacts

- Waste Watch
- Community Composting Network
- The Wildlife Trusts
- HDRA and The Composting Association
- ENTRUST

8 Labour Needs and Issues

The necessary labour force

In order to set up and run a Community Composting project you need willing workers. The necessary weekly time input varies with the scale of operations from 5 – 10 hours to 50 – 60 hours. A minimum of one very committed individual plus three or four helpers is therefore suggested initially. Once the enterprise is up and running two people may be sufficient to keep it ticking over, with extra help needed only when large jobs are to be carried out.

Labour sources

Where the enterprise is set up within an existing group such as the Scouts or an allotment association, a potential labour force already exists within the membership. Support can be sought through the club newsletter or by outside advertising, in the local press for example. Some ventures have drawn on children's groups such as scouts and schools, the probationary service, and prisoners. Such people may need close supervision, however, and health and safety rules must be strictly adhered to.

When first starting up it may well be possible to rely on voluntary labour. However, interest tends to wane after a while, and in the long term it may be advisable to look at using paid help, especially for such jobs as shredding or driving. The work is available in short stints and may be suitable for unemployed or retired people. The payment does not need to be in actual money: LETS currency can be offered if there is such a scheme operating locally.
See *PR & Marketing 2*)

It must be pointed out that where paid staff are employed, health and safety becomes a duty and appropriate safety regulations must be adhered to. Certain facilities must then be provided.

Required facilities

- Toilet facilities
- Washing facilities
- First aid kit

This is not to say that health and safety can be ignored if volunteers only are used! For advice on all matters of health and safety, contact the Health and Safety Executive. If in any doubt get advice in writing to cover yourselves.

Paid or voluntary?

Offering payment for services allows access to skilled and reliable labour, which is not dependent upon interest, enthusiasm or the weather. However, such labour is subject to Health and Safety laws as well as adding expense to the scheme. Voluntary labour is subject to personal whims and enthusiasm can wane with time. It does, however, provide a cheap labour force for the project while providing a suitable environment for learning about composting and for building community spirit.

The decision whether to employ workers or rely on volunteers will depend on your individual scheme. If a large potential labour pool of enthusiasts is available it may be better to tap it, at least initially until the venture becomes established. Once the enterprise is on its feet, it may become too large a commitment for volunteers or interest may slacken off. If so then this is the time to consider employing personnel.

Organisation of the labour force

A volunteer work force will benefit if some thought is given to motivation and organisation. Rotas can be invaluable for ensuring labour is available for the large, less popular jobs. They also ensure that the work is shared around according to how much each individual is able to contribute. In a large group a rota can help to ensure that volunteers who work well together are on duty at the same time and to avoid personality clashes. However, a positive attitude from a central, enthusiastic figure can reduce the need for strict rotas, using informal meetings to organise the week's work.

Where volunteers are to be used, keeping their interest and enthusiasm alive is central to ensuring a continuation of labour supply.

Suggestions for motivating volunteers

- Involve volunteers in all aspects of the project and give them responsibility where possible
- Keep people informed
- Make work fun
- Make work safe
- Provide facilities for tea-making, shelter and toilets, if possible
- Pay out-of-pocket expenses
- Arrange bagging days which are community operations
- Arrange social events
- Offer rewards of bags of finished compost
- Address grievances promptly

Jobs to be covered

There are a number of different kinds of work to be done in a Community Composting scheme. It is not all shovelling muck! In a small organisation there will be a certain amount of overlap but in a large one it may be necessary to appoint

individuals for particular jobs. If a Composting Club is set up it will be necessary to appoint a chair, secretary and treasurer. Even in a less formal situation it will be necessary to decide who will keep track of the funds, organise the work force or take care of the paperwork. Record keeping is essential for obtaining recycling credits and other grants and funds.

People needed

- Administrative personnel
- Labour manager (responsible for ensuring labour is available when required)
- Site manager
- Driver(s)
- Manual workers for compost making
- Machinery operators, especially for shredding
- Skilled workers for construction of bins / sheds/ hard standing etc.

Other relevant sections

- Legal Aspects
- PR & Marketing
- Getting Started

9 Public Relations & Marketing 1

Promoting the enterprise

Positive publicity can be used to your advantage to gain support in many areas. Once you have people on your side you will soon find that you have enough workers for your scheme, funds coming in, plenty of composting material, sales for your product if you so desire, and little in the way of antagonism.

For a Community Composting scheme to work you need the good will of a lot of people: volunteers to run the operation and sort out any hitches, donors of materials, officials who deal with licensing and other permits, those holding the purse strings for funding, and those who can sway public opinion. The last thing you need is bad publicity which could lead to the failure of your venture. Complaints, real or imagined, could snowball until you are faced with serious opposition and must therefore be prevented before they have had the chance to develop.

Attracting volunteers and members

If you are operating within an existing group there will already be a mechanism such as a newsletter to inform the membership about new developments. If the newsletter regularly promotes the work in a positive way members of the group are more likely to come forward. When you are starting from scratch, or need to attract new blood to an existing scheme, it will be necessary to reach the general public.

Options for reaching the public

- Leaflets and fliers
- Posters and stickers
- Local newspaper
- Local radio and television
- Open days and other events

Using a combination of different methods reaches a wider range of people. Don't forget, the community grapevine is a powerful tool and can work for you if you are in touch with the right community members.

Educating the public

It is not enough to simply say 'we are here and we want your rubbish'. According to decisions made when devising a plan for your enterprise you will want only certain types of material for composting. It is necessary to inform the public, who will be providing the feedstock, what it is that you require. Bearing in mind that only a small area will be targeted, the best way to do this is probably by leaflet to all homes. The effectiveness of this approach is reinforced if you offer a collection

service. Members of your scheme can inspect the material on offer as they collect it. You can't beat the personal touch.

Home composting

A Community Composting scheme can also encourage home composting. If your project has decided not to accept kitchen and food waste and if it is not composted at home it will simply go into the waste stream. If feasible, one of the services you could offer is simple advice – in the form of a leaflet, short courses at the composting site, or just talking to the people who supply the raw material for composting – on how to compost successfully at home. This service should be seen as being complementary to your scheme and it could be a useful marketing exercise as well.

Dealing with complaints

In general people are less likely to complain about a scheme which is popular. Showing that your venture has the approval of the public and officials will tend to reduce antagonism. However, it must be acknowledged that some genuine complaints may be made. You must establish a system to deal with) these.

There are two likely sources of complaint – official sources such as the Environment Agency and the general public. The chances of such problems occurring can be reduced by seeking advice from the relevant officials or the CCN and by advance planning. Always make sure you act within any licence restrictions and are adequately insured (see *Legal Aspects*). If you are likely to produce any leachate, for example if you are composting manure, seek advice on pollution minimisation (see *Site Issues*).

Complaints from the public could be about noise pollution, quality of the compost or availability. Problems such as dust, noise, exhaust fumes or smell can be minimised by careful siting of operations (see *Site Issues*). Some queries such as those about smells, diseases or vermin may simply be expressions of concern rather than a response to an actual problem. In such cases questioners will need to be informed of the relevant facts. If the same concerns are brought up frequently, it would be a good idea to address them in a newsletter or leaflet for public distribution, for example at open days.

Ensure that prospective users of the compost are clear about what they are buying, and what it should be used for. If distributing direct from the site, consider leaving bags open so that customers can see what they are getting.

The supply of compost may not be regular. At certain times finished compost may be unavailable because it has all been distributed and the next batch is not yet ready. Informing potential users when it will be ready or launching the "new batch" as a publicity event may help in these circumstances. If insufficient compost is being produced due to other constraints it will be necessary to address these problems as they occur. If you receive too much material for the available

space consider expanding operations. If insufficient raw material arrives, advertise for more.

Other relevant sections

- Grants and Other Funding
- Planning the Enterprise
- Compost Materials
- Site Issues
- Legal Aspects

Useful contacts

- CCN

10 Public Relations & Marketing 2

Name and logo

A Community Composting scheme needs a name. Choose an unambiguous name which declares who you are and what you are doing such as Run-A-Muck or Rotters. A recognisable logo is also valuable for use in all your promotional exercises. This can be displayed on a collection vehicle, leaflets, advertising and any packaging to add a corporate identity to publicity.

Managing publicity

Leaflets can be treated as newsletters or vice versa. They are small news packages which can be sent out now and again. Initially you will need to produce one to inform people about the scheme, what it is, who is doing it, people to contact concerning it and so on, in order to attract people to the project. Later they can be used to inform of further developments, progress and events.

Leaflet guidelines

- Keep it short and to the point
- Use illustrations where possible
- Keep language simple and jargon-free
- Stress the advantages to the local community
- Include details of who to contact

What to include in a leaflet

- Aims of project
- Benefits to householders
- How they can provide material
- Hoe they could get involved
- Simple, clear instructions on the suitability of materials
- Hints and tips for other recycling
- Collection / delivery days / times / locations
- Phone numbers for queries
- Any costs to them

A flier – a short, single sheet version of a leaflet – or small poster is handy for getting over a message such as what materials the project will accept. Posters can be used to advertise particular events such as meetings or open days, and stickers can be displayed, in the windows of cars and houses, to show support for the scheme and keep it in the public mind. Each of these communication devices should incorporate the project name, logo and any additional information in as concise a manner as possible.

The use of the public media

Local newspapers, local radio stations and regional television are always on the look out for stories, especially the rare and unusual. To use them to publicise your venture, prepare a press release containing the facts about your operation and, if possible, offer a photo opportunity or interview with a spokesperson for the group. Over time it is possible to develop good relationships with journalists. When exploring markets for your compost, it is helpful to be able to offer opportunities for publicity in the local media as an incentive for potential outlets such as garden centres. Even larger chains now have environment policies which promote locally produced goods, so consider them too.

Holding events

As long as your site is able to accommodate the public, an open day is a good public relations exercise. People who have taken part in the scheme by contributing material, equipment or funds can in some way then see what they have helped to create. Sceptics can also see what has been achieved and may be persuaded to join in. Samples of the finished product should be displayed.

If you are able to produce a variety of composts such as composted wood chippings for a mulch, leafmould, or a mixture containing composted manure suitable for use as a potting mix, a display of each material with a mock up of how it is to be used or plants grown in it could make a very persuasive visual argument. Do no forget to invite the press.

Other relevant cards

- Grants and Other Funding
- Public Relations and Marketing 1
- Making the Compost

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Distributing the compost

The methods used to distribute finished compost vary between existing projects. Some projects such as allotment sites or farms use the compost on site. Volunteers working on other projects are allowed to take the compost for their own use, or it may be returned to Compost Club members free of charge. Other groups sell the compost through local outlets, for cash, local currency or a mixture of the two.

Selling compost helps to raise the profile of the project – but it should not be relied upon as a major source of funding. Treat the income as a bonus. If you are intending to sell compost, some good market research is required. You also need to be able to produce a regular, good quality supply, especially if it is going for sale in a garden centre or similar outlet.

Potential markets

- Members of the scheme
- Donors of raw materials
- Allotment societies and garden clubs
- Local shops
- Local nurseries and garden centres
- Landscape gardeners and environmental groups
- Local authorities
- Local residents

Encourage landscapers to use your compost and promote it to local allotment sites and garden clubs. Environmental groups may also be interested in using composted green waste in their work. At the Seagull project in Skegness the compost has been used by their local authority and was specified by the Groundwork Trust in one of their local projects. Selling your product loose, in bulk, avoids the need for bagging, promotes the scheme to a wider section of the community and distributes larger quantities of finished compost. By both promoting the scheme to more potential contributors of raw materials and increasing use if the end product, you will help to ensure a continuous turnover of material.

Selling the compost

If in the course of your planning you have decided to sell the end product of your labours you will need to determine a marketing strategy

Marketing points to consider

- Similar products available, their cost and quality
- Potential local markets
- Product price

- Quantity and quality of the products which can be produced
- Seasonal variations in supply
- Packaging and presentation

It may be possible to sell direct from the site, having people collect supplies as required. If further markets are desired it will be necessary to persuade managers of local shops and garden centres to stock your compost.

You will need to set up a meeting to discuss the scheme and to decide quantities and price. It is a good idea to invite prospective stockists to visit the site and view operations. Pricing of similar products already on the market will give some idea what to charge (see also *Grants and Other Funding*).

LETS

Compost can be sold through LETS (Local Exchange Trading Systems), in which case no actual money changes hands. Compost is swapped for the ability to obtain services or goods, using the local currency. These schemes can be quite large. The 'virtual' income raised could be used to buy in labour, specialist skills, wood for compost bins and so on. Details of local LETS groups are available from LETSLINK UK.

Packaging and labelling

Depending on your market, you may decide to package your products in attractive, smart, clean bags. Bear this in mind when setting the price of your goods. The cost of specially printed bags is very high. It is much cheaper to buy plain sacks and either write on them or use CCN labels. These can have your own logo printed on them and can be stapled to the sacks.

Alternatively, it may be more appropriate to exploit the environmentally-friendly image which recycling used bags will give. Many schemes distribute their finished compost in re-used feed or fertiliser bags turned inside out and tied at the top. These can be returned for re-use. Small quantities can go in plastic carrier bags.

What to include on labels

Labels should give as much information as possible about the product without becoming cluttered and unintelligible.

- Producers' details
- Your logo
- What raw materials it contains
- What it can be used for eg mulch, potting mix etc
- Any relevant test results

For more information on labels and labelling, see *The End Product*

Recycling credits

To claim recycling credits it is necessary to have an accurate account of how much material has been processed. Bagging the compost allows the opportunity for records to be kept on how much is being produced. This can either be recorded by weight or volume. Volume is the simplest and can be calculated using a bucket. Weight is influenced by moisture content, so it can be highly variable. Weighing also requires the use of scales which is an extra expense.

Unbagged material can still be recorded by weighing in bulk and the value of offering it loose should not be ignored, for selling in bulk to landscapers, local authorities etc, or by distribution by the barrow load to allotment holders. Your target market will dictate which you do.

Product testing

See *The End Product*.

Other relevant sections

- Public Relations and Marketing
- Planning the Enterprise
- Grants and Other Funding
- The End Product